

ABSTRACT

The Glass Ceiling Effect:
Sex Differences In Explanations for Career Progress in Trinidad

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Despite their increased numbers in the labour force and achievements in education, women continue to have an insignificant presence in the higher echelons of management. It is a somewhat prevalent view that glass ceiling barriers such as limited female career progress have been created and reinforced by cultural values and traditional gender roles.

The social-role theory (Eagly 1987) provides an explanation of how these stereotypes which society places on sex differences can affect work experience (Franke, Crown, and Spake 1997). Women are primarily 'communal' or stereotyped as caring, nurturing, warm and expressive, including being concerned about the welfare of others; friendly, unselfish, emotionally expressive, non-objective, insecure, artistically inclined, indecisive and dependent, enjoy working closely with others and willing to accept change. Conversely, men are seen as more 'agentic' or strong and active, independent, decisive, masterful, assertive, rational, objective, self-confident, self-reliant and instrumentally competent.

The statistical techniques used in the data analysis are chi-square tests (χ^2), multiple response analysis, independent-samples t tests, and multiple regression analysis. There were no sex differences found in the percentages of middle managers that believed that there were equal opportunities for middle managers, the reasons given for unequal advancement, aspirations to obtain a senior management position, expectations of receiving a senior management position, and explanations for not receiving a future promotion. Minimal sex differences were found in the explanations given by middle managers for their own progress and reasons for their last promotion.

The results from this study imply that Trinidadian women have experienced a great deal of progress in the workplace and this outcome leads us to the conclusion that women have made such tremendous headway and been so successful that the glass ceiling no longer exists in this country.

Keywords: glass ceiling effect; women; career progress